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THE FOLLOWING DIR FSINFATC 001346 DTG R 202044Z MAY 09
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UNCLAS DIR FSINFATC 001346

MCO PLEASE PASS TO ALDAC
DEPARTMENT FOR S/ES-O/CMS, DS/IP, AND CA/OCS/ACS

FOR AMBASSADORS, DCMS/POS, AND EAC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [AEMR](#) [AMGT](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#)

SUBJECT: CRISIS MANAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

REF: (A) State 6306, (B) State 13929

¶1. SUMMARY: FSI delivers approximately 100 Crisis Management Exercises (CMEs) annually at Foreign Service posts worldwide. This cable highlights best practices and key lessons learned from the FSI-directed CMEs conducted over the past 12 months. END SUMMARY.

Emergency Action Plan (EAP) Best Practices

¶2. Posts with staff that are familiar with the content of the Mission's EAP had the most accurate plans and are likely better prepared to effectively confront crisis situations. Reviewing the EAP should be part of the new arrival check-in process. Some posts include a review of the EAP in new staff orientations. In addition:

-- A CD-ROM version of the EAP should be available at all satellite locations without access to OpenNet.

-- A link to the EAP should be placed on the post intranet home page, so all officers and LE staff can easily access the unclassified portions.

-- Hardcopies of the updated unclassified EAP need to be placed in critical locations, such as the ACCs and Safehavens, in the event the computer systems fail.

Who Is The Incident Commander?

¶3. CMT would like to highlight Embassy Kyiv's best practice of creating a single chart that clearly designates the primary and alternate incident commanders for each annex and supporting function listed in the 12 FAH-1 Emergency Planning Handbook. Posts can download a copy of this chart, labeled the Model EAC Chart, from the CMT homepage at <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/lms/cmt> (also reachable by typing CMT in the iNet search field). Some posts have realized that

not every primary or alternate incident commander needs to be an American.

----- Role-Specific EAP Binders -----

¶4. Some posts have developed role-specific binders to assist the primary incident commanders of each EAP annex. These role-specific binders are more compact and targeted than the full EAP, making it easier for the incident commander to customize, update, and internalize his roles and responsibilities. Each binder includes relevant check-lists, tripwires, contact lists, emergency contact information for all staff (including email addresses and cell phone and landline numbers), and tabs for the additional information needed for their specific role. Emergency Action Committee (EAC) members bring their role-specific binder to every EAC meeting in order to review materials and add useful information. The binder can be easily passed to the alternate EAC member, when the primary EAC member plans to be absent from post.

----- Alternate Command Centers -----

¶5. Have you test-driven your ACC recently? Often posts will conduct an inventory of their ACC to ensure that required equipment is present, only to find later other surprises that interfere with effective usage of the ACC:

-- One post found that their ACC was extremely uncomfortable in the summer, without fans or some sort of climate control;

-- Another post realized that a microwave, small fridge, and coffeemaker were necessary for productive multi-day use;

-- A third post learned that the generator refueling procedure required crossing the entire city, which would be an unrealistic proposition during extensive civil unrest or a natural disaster;

-- A fourth belatedly discovered that there were no reliable 24-hour bathroom facilities.

¶6. One best practice is for posts to conduct ACC drills, which require an embassy section to work out of the ACC for a defined period of time, such as a half or full day. This experience will undoubtedly generate a very helpful punch list, which can be addressed prior to those pesky riots blocking embassy access.

----- Safehavens -----

¶7. Over the past year, a number of posts have pressure tested their safehavens in actual crises. Interesting lessons learned include:

-- Does the safehaven have a hardcopy of the EAP?

-- Is the key for the locked supplies closet easily accessible?

-- Who is the floor warden for the safehaven?

-- Does the safehaven SOP include cell phone rules to guide 200 anxious employees all trying to call out at the sametime?

-- Does the safehaven include a binder with employee rosters, spouse and older children numbers, and other useful emergency notification information?

¶8. Consider obstacles to entering the safehaven. Entering a safehaven often means entering a controlled access area, requiring a cleared American to be posted to allow LE staff access. SOPs also need to be updated in cases where certain hard line areas may be locked down during a crisis, inhibiting personnel inside from proceeding to the safehaven, until Post One can release their doors.

¶9. Keep Post One available for crisis communications. Several posts

noted that switching the phones over to Post One when entering the safehaven created a new problem: Post One would immediately become inundated with calls from the public and press, hindering their ability to react during and after a crisis, and impeding the Operations Center's ability to reach Post One. A best practice is to update the recorded message on the public number, and leave Post One free to handle crisis communications.

----- Communications -----

¶10. Many posts ran into communications issues, whether expired satellite phone contracts, insufficient quantity of satellite phones, lack of radio training, or outdated Post Emergency Notification Systems (such as phone cascade lists). Some lessons learned include:

-- Some posts with appropriate local infrastructure committed to leveraging text messaging as an additional phone tree option.

-- One post recommended that the cell phone numbers of spouses, members of households and older children, and personal email addresses of all staff should be added to their SMS Emergency Notification System under their own collective.

-- Others posts decided to implement an embassy housing cluster warden system, to facilitate messages should cell towers go out of service.

¶11. Many posts realized the fragility of the cellular and landline phone networks and the corresponding importance of radios. As a result, some posts concluded radios should be issued to senior LE staff, or that additional radios should be procured to equip both work spaces and residences. In addition, radio coverage or alternative communications mechanisms should be made available to schools that serve mission children; for example, one post installed radios in their international school buses and trained drivers on their usage.

----- Which LE Staff Can Come to Work Today? -----

¶12. Do you expect your senior LE staff to report to work during a crisis? Some posts discovered it was insufficient to simply designate the more experienced LE staff as emergency personnel and assume they could show up at the embassy during a crisis. In the CMEs, LE housing locations would have required LE staff to transit burning barricades, blocked bridges, or other dangerous chokepoints during civil unrest, city wide terrorism, or a natural disaster. Understanding which senior LE staff can commute to the embassy under different emergency conditions can be very helpful when drawing up realistic emergency rosters.

----- External Participation -----

¶13. Include non-post constituencies in your Crisis Management Exercises (CMEs). Several posts invited host government emergency preparedness officials, members of the international schools, local OSAC members or other key AmCit community contacts, and/or members of other foreign missions to sit in on the CME. Having these additional local participants paid dividends, such as allowing the EAC to quickly query how local response would affect the EAP, learning that local officials had additional resources that could be brought to bear on a crisis, or considering how our actions would trigger a cascade effect among other foreign missions. One host government clarified the availability of additional safehaven facilities, should embassy offices, warehouses, or housing be damaged in a natural disaster. Additionally, host government participation in the exercise may serve a useful training function and could assist the host country in better preparing for its emergencies.

¶14. Based on lessons learned from recent evacuations to neighboring posts (Beirut/Nicosia, Belgrade/Zagreb, Ndjamena/Yaounde,

Tbilisi/Yerevan, and Minsk/Vilnius), CME scenarios will now occasionally include a receipt of evacuees exercise, or an evacuation to a neighboring post exercise. Several posts have commented that it would be useful to have a representative from the neighboring post present in their CME, to mitigate common misunderstandings and pitfalls in a neighboring evacuation and improve mutual regional support.

The Importance of Drills

¶15. While many post employees know the actions they should take during a drill when in their primary workplace, many were less sure of what to do when they were in less familiar surroundings, such as visiting a different embassy section housed in another building. Conducting regular and frequent drills will increase the likelihood of an employee responding correctly in an unfamiliar environment to the different assembly points and shelter options. The frequency of drills must at a minimum be conducted per regulations listed in 12 FAH-1 H-765, but drills should be stepped up during and immediately after the summer months, when staff turnover is highest.

Revised Pandemic Influenza Guidance

¶16. The Department recently issued additional guidance on pandemic influenza tripwires (reftels), reaffirming that evacuation should not be expected and other methods of departure may not be available, and making it essential that posts and individuals make prior preparations for remaining overseas during a pandemic. Airports will likely have already closed and/or countries will likely have denied entry for travelers from infected areas, before a post can effectively act on departure possibilities. Posts that conduct a pandemic influenza Crisis Management Exercise are often surprised by the amount of work that must be done to properly prepare for such a crisis. The possibility of a pandemic influenza remains, and posts should be cautious of warning fatigue.

Skills Bank Lists

¶17. Official personnel and their adult members of household often possess useful skills outside of their cones or specific position descriptions that may prove beneficial in the event of an emergency, such as plumbing, electrical, computer, or day care skills. To leverage these skills, several posts have drafted and instituted a voluntary Skills Bank worksheet, which has been included into the Human Resources check-in packets. The skills can then be listed in the EAP Appendix 2.

CME Lessons Learned Fiscal Opportunities

¶18. Leverage your recent CME lessons learned by soliciting department support. The focus of a CME often sheds light on non-functioning or absent equipment, such as radios and satellite phones, or office equipment for the ACC. Savvy posts will use the lessons learned cable after the CME to justify additional funds to close these critical gaps in crisis preparedness.

Post-Directed Tabletop CMEs

¶19. Emergency planning is a perishable skill. During the intervening periods between FSI-delivered CMEs, posts experience significant staff turnover. To improve post readiness, EACs have the option to conduct a post-directed, tabletop CME to educate new transfers or prepare for an anticipated crisis (e.g. scheduled elections civil unrest, seasonal flooding and mudslides, or increasing regional terrorism). Sample distance learning table-top CMEs can be found on the CMT website at <http://fsi.state.gov/fsi/lms/cmt>. FSI trainers can, on a resource-available basis, help posts customize the distance learning

table-top CMEs and provide controller mentoring and guidelines.
Contact FSI/LMS/CMT program officer Chris Dorn at DornCH@state.gov
for more information on how FSI can help you run a productive,
post-directed, tabletop CME.

¶20. MINIMIZED CONSIDERED

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